

Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, which is a clear and concise response on behalf of the majority of Americans who share our opposition to the President Bush's misguided plan to escalate the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq.

We can all agree upon – and must take this opportunity once again to affirm – that our support for the brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces is steadfast and unyielding. As this resolution declares, our first priority must continue to be protecting the brave men and women in uniform, who have served this nation honorably and valiantly.

The decision to invade Iraq is the single most devastating and misguided foreign policy decision our nation has ever made. And the process of protecting our nation from compounding this tragic error must begin this week, under new leadership, with a clear vision *and a plan* that finally acknowledges we can no longer stay the course in Iraq. After nearly four years of war, the sacrifice of more than 3,100 brave servicemen and women, tens of thousands more injured, and over \$600 billion spent on the war to date, President Bush's "Mission Accomplished" declaration rings hollow.

We must not forget whose war and misguided strategy have failed us, and we must ask who the President is listening to beyond the small circle of advisors who were the architects of this fiasco in the first place. The only strategy this Administration has proposed is to 'stay the course,' augmented by four earlier surges along with the most recent plan to deploy an additional 21,500 U.S. troops, likely to further escalate closer to 40- to 60,000 more troops before the year's end. This latest policy is "stay the course" writ large.

The President's plan operates under the assumption that somehow, despite all the evidence to the contrary, there is a military path to success if only more troops are on the ground. Not only is this logic flawed, but it also flies in the face of the wisdom of his top generals in the field, such as the former commander of U.S. Central Command, John Abizaid, who told the Senate Armed Services Committee that, *"more American troops right now is not the solution to the problem."*

I agree. We cannot afford to inject more of America's best and brightest into the chaos, particularly without the armor and training to protect them. Short-changing our heroes in the face of a relentless insurgency is unworthy of this nation. If we can't supply our troops with what they need, how can we possibly contemplate an escalation.

Without a reduction to the violence against U.S. troops, without stability in the region, and without evidence of a correlation between the number of U.S. troops and the number of trained Iraqi troops, now is the time to *reduce* the U.S. combat presence in Iraq – not expand it.

The Republican mantra has been that Democrats don't have a plan for Iraq other than cut and run, an assertion that is simply false. We do have a comprehensive plan for Iraq that includes: implementing the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group; a regional conference to engage Iraq's neighbors diplomatically; and seeking political solutions to the escalating turmoil in the region. And again I would ask-what evidence is there to suggest that this President will listen to anyone's plan other than his own?

This is not simply an insurgency that needs to be crushed. Confirmed by the President's most recent National Intelligence Estimate, Iraq is in a state of a civil war and thus political solutions are needed to address the real problems. Although al-Qaeda remains active in Iraq, they have been surpassed by ethnic violence – the primary source of conflict and the most immediate threat to stability in Iraq.

Proponents of the war claim that those opposed to the surge aren't supporting the troops. I would ask them how we are supporting our troops while keeping them in a country where seventy percent of Iraqis believe it is acceptable to attack U.S. troops; where seventy-eight believe that our troops provoke more violence than they prevent; and three-quarters of them would feel safer if American forces left Iraq.

By staying the course in Iraq, we are putting our troops in a situation that has no positive outcome. Aren't the lives of our troops more valuable than saving political face and trying to proving a point?

And while it is well known that the claims of WMD were based on faulty intelligence and that there was no substantive connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda, why are we committing our troops and resources toward referring a civil war in Iraq, thereby diverting resources required to win the Global War on Terror, rather than fighting al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, tracking down Osama bin Laden, and preventing another terrorist attack against America?

The President's earlier NIE made it very clear last April that the war in Iraq has become a primary recruitment vehicle for violent Islamic extremists, motivating a global jihadist movement and a new generation of potential terrorists around the world whose numbers may be increasing faster than the United States and our allies can reduce the threat.

The NIE also indicates that, rather than contributing to eventual victory in the global counter-terrorism struggle, the situation in Iraq has diminished America's position. What additional evidence does the President need to prove that his policies in Iraq are only making matters worse for Iraqis and making the world decidedly less safe for America?

And to those who would argue that this resolution sends a signal to our enemies that we are weak and divided, you are wrong. This debate proves why democracy works, unites us, makes us stronger, more resolute, and why these strengths – that our enemies envy and seek to overcome – will ensure that we ultimately prevail over them.

Opposition to this surge does not mean a lack of support for our troops. Rather, it affirms what the American people made clear last November – that our policy in Iraq is not working and we need a new direction.

I will vote for this resolution, and I will continue to join with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to bring our involvement in this misguided tragedy to an end. Voicing opposition to this war, to this President's policies, and to more of the same is our solemn responsibility, consistent with the objectives of this resolution, the hopes of the American people, and the mission of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the Majority leadership and the distinguished chairmen of the Armed Services and International Relations Committees for their hard work and making this debate a priority of this Congress. I yield back the balance of my time.